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# COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

## A Common Agenda for Integration
## Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION ..... 3

2. STRENGTHENING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES ..... 4

3. TOWARDS A COHERENT APPROACH AT EU LEVEL ..... 10

4. CONCLUSIONS ..... 14

ANNEX ..... 16

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Legal migration and integration of third-country nationals are part of an important debate today across the enlarged European Union. Most Member States are now experiencing migratory phenomena and are confronted with integration challenges. Some countries, including the new Member States, have only recently been faced with immigration. Others have dealt with immigration and integration challenges for decades but not always with satisfactory results, and they are consequently revising their policies. Reflecting the different histories, traditions and institutional arrangements, there are a wide variety of approaches being taken to find solutions to the problems which need to be tackled. This Communication draws conclusions from policies carried out so far.

The integration of third-country nationals living and working in the EU has gained increasing importance on the European agenda in recent years. Following the request of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council in 2002 to establish National Contact Points on integration (NCPs), the European Council of June 2003 confirmed that mandate and invited the Commission to present Annual Reports on Migration and Integration[1]. In its Communication on Immigration, Integration and Employment[2] the Commission set out a holistic approach to integration. In November 2004, the first edition of a *Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners* was published.

The Hague Programme, adopted by the European Council of 4-5th November 2004, underlines the need for greater co-ordination of national integration policies and EU initiatives in this field. It further states that a framework, based on common principles, should form the foundation for future initiatives in the EU, relying on clear goals and means of evaluation[3]. The JHA Council of 19 November 2004 adopted Common Basic Principles (CBPs) to underpin a coherent European framework on integration of third-country nationals[4]. The Hague Programme invited the Commission to present a policy plan on legal migration before the end of 2005. As a first step, the Commission published a Green Paper on an EU approach to managing economic migration[5], underlining that admission measures must be accompanied by strong integration policies.

Integration is a major concern in a number of EU policies. The effective and responsible integration of immigrants in the labour market constitutes an important contribution to reaching the Lisbon targets. The Commission stimulates and supports Member States' efforts in employment, social affairs and equal opportunities, stressing the gender perspective to fully utilise the potential of immigrant women in the labour market. The new Integrated Guidelines for Jobs and Growth call on Member States to take action to increase the employment of immigrants.

The promotion of fundamental rights, non discrimination and equal opportunities for all are key integration issues. EU legislation provides a strong framework of anti-discrimination

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1 The first report was published in 2004 : COM(2004) 508.
2 COM(2003) 336.
3 Annex I to the Presidency Conclusions, European Council, 4/5 November 2004.
4 Council Document 14615/04 of 19 November 2004.
5 COM(2004) 811.

legislation[6]. In its Communication on a framework strategy for non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all[7], the Commission stresses the need to reinforce efforts to promote equal opportunities for all in order to tackle the structural barriers faced by migrants, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups. The proposed European Year of Equal Opportunities for All in 2007 and the envisaged European Year of Inter-cultural Dialogue in 2008 will be major awareness-raising initiatives contributing to these objectives.

Integration measures need adequate financial resources. The EU supports Member States' integration policies through a number of financial instruments. The Preparatory Actions for integration of third-country nationals (INTI) have been important in promoting activities at local level, strengthening networks and the exchange of information and good practices between Member States, regional and local authorities and other stakeholders. They have attracted great interest but lacked sufficient resources to match the vast needs in this area. Under the financial perspectives 2007-2013, the Commission has proposed new solidarity instruments, among them a European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals, based on the CBPs.

The objectives of the Fund are complementary to the European Social Fund (ESF), which builds on the experiences of the Community Initiative EQUAL in supporting innovative approaches to the prevention of labour market discrimination of migrants. The Commission's proposal for the ESF period 2007-2013 includes a specific focus on reinforcing the social inclusion of people at a disadvantage. The European Regional Development Fund also supports certain integration measures.

This Communication is the Commission's first response to the invitation of the European Council to establish a coherent European framework for integration. The cornerstones of such a framework are proposals for concrete measures to put the CBPs into practice, together with a series of supportive EU mechanisms. Taking into account existing EU policy frameworks, the Communication provides new suggestions for action both at EU and national level. Member States are encouraged to strengthen their efforts with a perspective to developing comprehensive national integration strategies, while new ways of ensuring consistency between actions taken at EU and national level are being proposed.

## 2. STRENGTHENING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES

The tables below are meant to provide guidance for EU and Member States' integration policies. The actions suggested (described in the Annex) build upon the Handbook on Integration, the INTI Preparatory Actions and the proposed European Fund for Integration. The order of actions does not reflect prioritisation. Their list is indicative and not exhaustive and it leaves the Member States to set priorities and select the actions as well as the way in which they are to be carried out within the context of their own national situations and traditions. They should be seen as main elements of all national and EU integration policies. A gender perspective should be incorporated into all relevant actions, as well as specific attention to the situation of migrant youth and children.

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6 Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

7 COM(2005) 224.

**1. *'Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States'***

| | |
|---|---|
| **National level** | **EU level** |
| Strengthening the ability of the host society to adjust to diversity by targeting integration actions at the host population<br><br>Setting up national programmes to implement the two-way approach<br><br>Increasing the understanding and acceptance of migration through awareness-raising campaigns, exhibitions, intercultural events, etc.<br><br>Promoting knowledge within the host society of the consequences of introduction programmes and admission schemes<br><br>Enhancing the role of private bodies in managing diversity<br><br>Promoting trust and good relations within neighbourhoods, e.g. through welcoming initiatives, mentoring, etc.<br><br>Co-operating with the media, e.g. through voluntary codes of practice for journalists | Supporting trans-national actions, e.g. campaigns or intercultural events, to project accurate information about immigrants' cultures, religions and social and economic contributions<br><br>Supporting pilot projects and studies to explore new forms of Community co-operation in the field of admission and integration |

**2. *'Integration implies respect for the basic values of the European Union'***

| | |
|---|---|
| **National level** | **EU level** |
| Emphasising civic orientation in introduction programmes and other activities for newly arrived third-country nationals with the view of ensuring that immigrants understand, respect and benefit from common European and national values | Including integration of third-country nationals in future Pluriannual Programmes of the proposed Fundamental Rights Agency<br><br>Exploring effective ways to raise public awareness about the basic values of the EU |

**3. *'Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible'***

| | |
|---|---|
| **National level** | **EU level** |
| Developing innovative approaches to prevent labour market discrimination<br><br>Involving social partners in the elaboration and implementation of integration measures<br><br>Informing employers and educational institutions about certificates for introduction courses to promote access to the labour market or training opportunities<br><br>Exploring additional ways of recognising newcomers' qualifications, training and/or professional experience, building upon existing laws<br><br>Supporting training capacities of small companies, business organisations and trade unions in sectors of the economy employing many migrants<br><br>Promoting employment for immigrant women, i.a. by ensuring that restrictions in labour market access are minimised and do not hamper integration, when transposing the Directive on the right to family reunification[8]<br><br>Encouraging the recruitment of migrants through awareness-raising, economic incentives and other measures targeted at employers<br><br>Supporting migrant entrepreneurship, e.g. through facilitated access to banking and credit services | Monitoring the impact of National Reform Programmes on labour market integration of immigrants<br><br>Encouraging Member States to develop labour market integration policies<br><br>Monitoring the application of the Directives concerning discrimination in employment and on third-country nationals who are long-term residents[9] |

[8] Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003.
[9] Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003.

**4. *'Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration'***

| | |
|---|---|
| **National level** | **EU level** |
| Strengthening the integration component of admission procedures, e.g. through pre-departure measures such as information packages and language and civic orientation courses in the country of origin<br><br>Organising introduction programmes and activities for newly arrived third-country nationals to acquire basic knowledge about language, history, institutions, socio-economic features, cultural life and fundamental values<br><br>Offering courses at several levels taking into account different educational backgrounds and previous knowledge of the country<br><br>Reinforcing the capacity of introduction programmes and activities for dependants of persons subject to admission procedures, women, children, elderly, illiterate persons and people with disabilities<br><br>Increasing the flexibility of introduction programmes through part-time and evening courses, fast track modules, distance and e-learning systems<br><br>Targeting introduction activities at young third-country nationals with specific social and cultural problems related to identity issues, including mentoring and role-model programmes<br><br>Pooling resources enabling adjacent municipalities to offer different types of courses | Stimulating trans-national actions, e.g. adaptation of good practices to different contexts, exchange of personnel, joint development of programmes, common dissemination of results<br><br>Supporting innovative integration programmes or models incorporating language and communication training, and the cultural, political and social characteristics of the host country |

***5. 'Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society'***

| | |
|---|---|
| **National level** | **EU level** |
| Reflecting diversity in the school curriculum<br><br>Taking into account the specific problems of young immigrants in measures to prevent underachievement and early school-leaving<br><br>Improving the participation of young migrants in higher education<br><br>Addressing effectively migrant youth delinquency | Incorporating integration objectives into the Commission's various educational programmes<br><br>Promoting education of third-country nationals through the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme<br><br>Facilitating transparent recognition of qualifications, notably through proposals for a European Qualifications Framework |

**6. *'Access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is a critical foundation for better integration'***

| | |
|---|---|
| **National level** | **EU level** |
| Strengthening the capacity of public and private service providers to interact with third-country nationals via intercultural interpretation and translation, mentoring, intermediary services by immigrant communities, 'one-stop-shop' information points<br><br>Developing comprehensive information tools, e.g. manuals, websites, registers of staff's diversity skills<br><br>Building sustainable organisational structures for integration and diversity management and developing modes of co-operation between governmental stakeholders enabling officials to exchange information and pool resources<br><br>Introducing schemes to gather and analyse information about the needs of different categories of third-country nationals at local and regional level through platforms for consultation, exchange of information between stakeholders and surveys of | Monitoring the application of the Directive on third-country nationals who are long-term residents and on equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin<br><br>Furthering co-operation in implementing Community law in the field of immigration and good practices in the area of integration<br><br>Supporting studies and exchange of best practices<br><br>Promoting the development of transferable intercultural training activities for public officials |

| | |
|---|---|
| immigrant communities<br><br>Engaging companies in debates on integration and linking governmental programmes with companies' corporate social responsibility programmes<br><br>Integrating intercultural competence into recruitment and training policies | |

**7. *'Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens'***

| | |
|---|---|
| **National level** | **EU level** |
| Promoting the use of common spaces and activities in which immigrants interact with the host society<br><br>Improving the living environment in terms of housing, healthcare, care facilities for children, neighbourhood safety and opportunities for education, voluntary work and job training, the condition of public spaces, the existence of stimulating havens for children and youth | Strengthening the integration dimension in Social Inclusion and Social Protection Policies<br><br>Encouraging the exchange of information and good practice with regional, local and urban authorities through networks operating at EU level and strengthening the link between these networks and the NCPs through ad hoc consultation and expertise<br><br>Supporting trans-national co-operation at regional, local and municipal level between public authorities, private enterprises and civil society, including migrants' associations |

**8. *'The practice of diverse cultures and religions is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be safeguarded, unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law'***

| | |
|---|---|
| **National level** | **EU level** |
| Developing constructive intercultural dialogue and thoughtful public discourse<br><br>Promoting inter- and intra-faith dialogue platforms between religious communities and /or between communities and policy-making authorities | Facilitating intercultural and inter-religious dialogue at European level, including various stakeholders<br><br>Further developing the Commission's dialogue with religious and humanist organisations |

**9. *'The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration'***

| | |
|---|---|
| **National level** | **EU level** |
| Increasing civic, cultural and political participation of third-country nationals in the host society and improving dialogue between different groups of third-country nationals, the government and civil society to promote their active citizenship<br><br>Supporting advisory platforms at various levels for consultation of third-country nationals<br><br>Encouraging dialogue and sharing experience and good practice between immigrant groups and generations<br><br>Increasing third-country nationals' participation in the democratic process, promoting a balanced gender representation, through awareness raising, information campaigns and capacity-building<br><br>Minimising obstacles to the use of voting rights, e.g. fees or bureaucratic requirements<br><br>Facilitating immigrants' participation in mainstream organisations, i.a. by supporting volunteer and internship schemes<br><br>Increasing involvement of third-country nationals in society's responses to migration<br><br>Building migrants' associations as sources of advice to newcomers, and including their representatives in introduction programmes as trainers and role models<br><br>Elaborating national preparatory citizenship and naturalisation programmes | Initiating a study/mapping exercise of the level of rights and obligations of third-country nationals in the Member States<br><br>Encouraging the opening-up of mainstream organisations to immigrants and the building of organisations representing their interests EU-wide<br><br>Fostering the creation of a platform of migrants' organisations and organisations representing migrants' interests at EU level<br><br>Exploring the value of developing a concept of civic citizenship as a means of promoting the integration of third-country nationals, including the rights and duties needed to give immigrants a sense of participation in society<br><br>Promoting research and dialogue on identity and citizenship questions |

## 3. TOWARDS A COHERENT APPROACH AT EU LEVEL

With due consideration to the competence of Member States and of their local and regional authorities, it is essential to foster a more coherent EU approach to integration. This would consist of consolidating the legal framework on the conditions for the admission and stay of third-country nationals, including their rights and responsibilities; developing specific

cooperation activities and exchange of information on integration; mainstreaming and evaluation.

### 3.1 Mainstreaming and Evaluation: Common Basic Principles 10 and 11

Successful implementation of policies and measures reflected by CBPs 1 to 9 rests upon two elements. Integration is not an isolated issue, it cuts across various policy fields, such as employment, education and urban policies, and it needs to be reflected in a whole range of policies (CBP 10). Furthermore, integration policies and measures have to be evaluated to be constantly improved (CBP 11).

**CBP 10:** ***'Mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public-policy formation and implementation'***

Actions needed at national level may include:

- Reinforcing the capacity to co-ordinate national integration strategy across different levels of government
- Ensuring that integration is an important element of policy on economic migration
- Mainstreaming integration in all relevant policies, while developing targeted integration strategies
- Paying due attention to the mainstreaming of gender equality and to the specific needs of migrant youth and children in integration policies
- Supporting co-operation, co-ordination and communication between stakeholders
- Ensuring that NCPs function as a national focal point and that information is shared and co-ordinated with all tiers of government and other stakeholders, in particular at regional and local level

Actions needed at EU level:

- Strengthening the network of NCPs
- Developing co-operation among institutions and services responsible for integration-related issues
- Building integration objectives into relevant mainstream European programmes

**CBP 11:** ***'Developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration and to make the exchange of information more effective'***

Actions needed at national level may include:

- Increasing capacity to monitor and evaluate integration policies, e.g. through national impact assessments, stakeholder-consultation mechanisms, indicators and monitoring measures

- Enhancing capacity to collect, analyse and disseminate statistics related to integration
- Evaluating admission procedures and introduction programmes through surveys among participants and stakeholders
- Developing evaluation schemes for compulsory integration programmes

Actions needed at EU level:

- Developing statistical tools and common indicators
- Supporting information exchange on national evaluation tools, and where appropriate developing European criteria for the process of comparative learning
- Supporting improved knowledge of integration, including analysis of the impact of compulsory elements in national integration policies
- Providing broader evidence base for integration policies through research
- Developing further the European Migration Network

### 3.2 Legal framework concerning the admission and stay of third-country nationals

Since the Community acquired competence in the area of migration under the treaty of Amsterdam, it has adopted a series of legislative instruments on the conditions for the admission and stay of third-country nationals (directives concerning family reunion, students, researchers, and the long-term residence). These directives create a legal framework, prescribing equality of treatment and according rights of access to employment, and to education/training, all of which elements are necessary components not only for a credible immigration policy but also for any successful integration of third-country nationals as part of that policy. In addition, EU legislation on anti-discrimination supports and develops this legal framework on the conditions for the admission and stay of third-country nationals. Any future migration instruments should take into account equality of treatment and rights for migrants.

### 3.3 Towards a coherent EU approach: cooperation and exchange of information on integration

#### *3.3.1 National Contact Points on Integration*

NCPs will continue to play an important role in monitoring progress across policy fields and in ensuring that efforts at national and EU level are mutually reinforcing. In developing the Handbook on Integration they were effective in exchanging information and good practice and identifying priority areas. Focusing their work more closely on the CBPs will support the development of the European framework. The current nature of NCPs should be maintained as their inherent flexibility and technical character facilitate exchange of information and experience. To make better use of their expertise, conveying key results to the Immigration and Asylum Committee, chaired by the Commission, as well as to the relevant Council structures concerned with integration-related policies and to the Presidency, will be undertaken when appropriate.

### *3.3.2 Handbook on Integration*

The first edition of the Handbook covered introduction courses for newly arrived immigrants and recognised refugees, civic participation and integration indicators. The Handbook, addressed to policy-makers and practitioners at local, regional, national and EU level, was welcomed by stakeholders. The second edition, planned for 2006, will focus on housing and urban issues, access to health and social services, integration in the labour market, mainstreaming and integration infrastructure and will incorporate the CBPs firmly into the analysis.

### *3.3.3 Integration website*

The Hague Programme called explicitly for the development of a widely accessible Internet website. The Ministers responsible for integration invited the Commission, in close co-operation with the NCPs, to establish a public-private partnership to create an integration website in order to maintain an inventory of good practices, to promote their exchange throughout the EU and beyond, and to assess continuously their efficacy and transferability to different contexts[10]. As a first phase, the Commission will launch a tender for a web portal for European experiences on immigrant integration.

### *3.3.4 Involving stakeholders*

As stated in the Hague Programme, stability and cohesion within our societies benefit from the integration of legally resident third-country nationals and their descendants. A comprehensive approach involving stakeholders at all levels is essential for the success of integration policies. Whereas the effective involvement of stakeholders at regional and local level can only be achieved in the national context, the Commission will take the appropriate action at EU level.

For this purpose, the Commission would set up a European Integration Forum. Its added value would be to assemble a range of stakeholders active in the area of integration at EU level. The targeted stakeholders would thus be, for example, EU umbrella organisations, having a membership across a number of Member States. The main functions of the forum would be consultation, exchange of expertise and drawing up recommendations to be published on the integration website. It should also have close links to the NCPs.

The European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will be invited to be involved in the European Integration Forum. Their representatives will also be encouraged to make ad hoc contributions to relevant meetings of the NCPs. They will be invited to participate in the preparatory conferences in the framework of the Handbook on Integration.

### *3.3.5 Annual Report on Migration and Integration*

The Commission's Annual Report will be an important instrument to monitor the further development of integration policies in the European Union.

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[10] Ministerial Conference, Groningen, 9-11 November 2004.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Legal migration and integration are inseparable and should mutually reinforce one another. The Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union put forward by this Communication represents a major commitment and demonstrates that the Commission is giving integration a high place on its policy agenda. A wide range of existing EU policies and financial instruments can help to support the efforts of national authorities and civil society. The challenge of the future will be to promote concerted efforts by all relevant stakeholders in order to maximise the impact and effectiveness of these instruments.

The Member States, together with the Commission, should take the necessary steps to develop the Common Agenda for Integration in a forward-looking and focused manner. The Ministers in charge of integration, in close co-operation with the Commission, should hold once a year a political debate on the integration of third-country nationals in the EU and assess the need for further action. The Commission also hopes that the other Institutions and stakeholders will join efforts to achieve the successful integration of third-country nationals into our societies.

## ANNEX

## I. POLICY CONTEXT

All levels of government are involved in developing and implementing integration policy. Experience over the last few years, and particularly since the adoption of the Tampere conclusions, has shown the usefulness of the exchange of information and good practice. This has taken place between Member States and at different levels of government. As a result, there has already been a certain amount of convergence in terms of policy and objectives for integration across the EU. A great deal of common ground has in fact been identified as far as key dimensions of integration are concerned. This is reflected in the Common Basic Principles (CBPs) on integration adopted by the Council in November 2004. They represent a major step forward in developing a common approach to integration and they have, therefore, been taken as the focus of this Communication. The adoption of the CBPs also underlines that in spite of the efforts made in recent years, both within the Member States and at EU level, integration policies need to be strengthened further. The adoption of these principles is also a recognition of the fact that failure in one individual Member State may have negative consequences for the others and for the European Union as a whole, and that it is in the interests of all Member States to pursue effective integration strategies.

Primary responsibility for the development and implementation of integration policy and measures nevertheless remains at the level of Member States. However, the Council has called on the Commission to support national efforts in this domain, particularly in view of the implications which one Member State's policy can have on the others. There are many benefits which can accrue from both exchanging information and co-operating together to tackle what are, so often, common problems.

## II. ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES

The actions suggested at national level are given as possible guidelines designed to help in the conception of national policies and programmes. They are also actions which can be supported under the proposals which the Commission has made for the European Fund for Integration to succeed INTI. The actions proposed at European level extend and develop activities which have shown their usefulness over recent years, in particular the promotion and support of networking amongst practitioners, the transfer of good practice and the exchange of information.

### CBP 1 'Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States'

This principle, which was already identified and adopted by the European Council in the conclusions of its meeting in Thessaloniki in June 2003, underlines that integration is a process of mutual accommodation requiring the **participation of both immigrants and the host society**. Strengthening the capacity of the receiving society to accommodate growing diversity by targeting integration actions at the host population is therefore of paramount importance. In reality integration takes place at the local level as part of daily life and everyone has a part to play. To be successful, integration must involve the receiving society in the provision of opportunities for the full participation of third-country nationals. Engaging local communities in working together is thus crucial. An important way of doing this is to

ensure that national programmes implementing a two-way approach and involving immigrants and the native population are set up.

Essential elements in this process are **accurate information about migrants** in their neighbourhood and possibilities for local people and immigrants to meet. Among possible actions that could be envisaged are awareness-raising campaigns, intercultural events involving local residents, migration exhibitions, all intended to project accurate information about both the local society and immigrants. These actions cover issues such as cultural traditions, religious practices, and social and economic contributions which immigrants can make to the host society. As openness and good neighbourliness are important elements of successful integration, promoting 'bridging capital', trust and friendly relations with the neighbouring community, for instance by means of **welcoming committees or mentoring**, is very valuable as has been shown by experience in immigration countries elsewhere in the world. **The media play an essential role** in providing balanced coverage and responsibly informing the public debate on immigration and integration. Thus various forms of co-operation with the media, including voluntary codes of practice offering guidance to journalists, are needed.

**CBP 2 'Integration implies respect for the basic values of the European Union'**

The Charter of Fundamental Rights describes the civil, political, economic and social rights of European citizens and of all persons resident in the EU. These are based on the values which all the Member States adhere to: human rights standards and values such as equality, anti-discrimination, solidarity, openness, participation and tolerance. Member States are responsible for assuring that all residents, including immigrants, understand, respect and benefit from common European and national values. In this context, putting strong emphasis on **civic orientation in introduction programmes and other activities** for newly arrived third-country nationals is necessary. EU values provide a framework within which individual Member States can develop their own codes based on their national laws and traditions. A first and essential element in this process is an understanding by immigrants of the nature of the society which they are joining. This underlines the importance of including civic orientation and other information in introduction programmes as soon as immigrants arrive.

At the European level, the proposed Fundamental Rights Agency can play a role by including the integration dimension into its future Pluriannual Programmes.

**CBP 3 'Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible'**

Access to the labour market is an essential ingredient of successful integration. One of the failures of current policies in many Member States can be shown by the significantly higher rate of unemployment of immigrants with respect to the native population. This is of particular concern with the second and third generation of young migrants in many countries. Much work is already being done throughout the EU to remedy this situation and it is one of the priorities of the **European Employment Strategy**. However, there are a number of areas which have perhaps not been given the attention they deserve at national level and which could be very useful in ensuring that the potential of immigrants is fully utilised. One of them is ensuring **recognition of qualifications** from third countries, making wider use of **certificates obtained by immigrants from initial introduction and training courses** and ensuring the value of **such courses as tools to access the labour market.** For regulated

professions, it is important to take into account professional qualifications obtained by the holder in third countries, as well as training undergone and/or professional experience, in procedures of professional recognition, while respecting minimum training requirements established by the relevant EU Directives. Decisions in this regard should be taken within a reasonable delay, reasons shall duly be given and the applicant shall have the right of appeal before the courts under national law.

There is an important role also for the **private sector** much of which recognises today the importance of diversity management. However, more could be done, especially at the local level, to involve small companies and businesses in particular by helping them to improve training for immigrants and by building up their capacity to manage a more diverse workforce. Further incentives to **engage employers in recruiting immigrants** and providing greater **support to migrant entrepreneurs** are equally important**.** In fact, a large potential of migrant entrepreneurship is still unused. **Employment of immigrant women** should be actively promoted.

At the EU level, the Commission will **monitor the impact of the National Reform Programmes** on the labour market integration of immigrants, encourage Member States to develop labour market integration strategies and monitor the **legislation which safeguards immigrant rights**, notably on the status of long-term residents; on combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

**CBP 4 'Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration'**

Enabling immigrants to acquire basic knowledge of the host society's language, history and institutions is essential for their integration. Knowledge of the language of the Member State concerned is seen as crucial not only for migrant workers but also for their family members and for their children to ensure they do not fall behind in their schools. **Introduction programmes** play an important role in helping newly arrived third-country nationals to gain skills and knowledge needed for full participation in society. They are an important investment in the future that both immigrants and the receiving society should be ready to make. Introduction courses provide immigrants with a better start on their way to self-sufficiency and facilitate their prospective contribution to the host society. For this reason, a number of suggestions are made for actions to increase their efficiency, for their organisation at various levels, taking into consideration divergent educational background and experience of immigrants; for enhancing their flexibility via part-time courses, evening courses, distance and e-learning, allowing participants to work or study at the same time and for achieving synergies by greater co-operation between service providers.

However, as managed migration schemes are established, and within the context of developing a European approach to the admission of labour migrants, there is scope for paying more attention to **pre-departure measures** which can improve the integration process on arrival. Such measures can be part of comprehensive migration and development strategies[11].

[11] On issues of migration and development, see Commission Communication COM(2005) 390.

Since this principle concerns such a key part of the integration process, the Commission should play an active role at EU level in stimulating the exchange of information and good practice and supporting innovative approaches.

**CBP 5 'Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society'**

The education and training systems in the Member States play a major role in the integration of new young immigrants and continue to do so with the second and third generation, particularly with respect to language learning. The success of the second and third generations of third-country nationals depends to a large extent on their level of attainment and the qualifications they obtain. Schools play an additional role as a place of acquiring knowledge of society and as a cultural bridge and can also encourage pluralism and diversity.

The systems themselves must adjust to manage increasing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity amongst their pupils and students. A number of actions related to the education of children and adolescents are necessary, including reflection of **diversity in the curriculum**. It is equally important to make **academic underachievement and early school-leaving**, as well as all forms of migrant youth delinquency, **priority areas for intervention**.

At EU level, reflecting diversity and issues concerning the integration of migrants should be better incorporated into the various educational programmes. Moreover, Strategic Objective 2 of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme 'Facilitating the access of all to education and training systems', encompasses the promotion of measures to increase social cohesion, of which the integration of migrants is a part[12]. Additionally, the Maastricht Communiqué of December 2004 encourages Member States to develop Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems which meet the needs of groups at risk of social and labour market exclusion, including migrants. Further, the Commission will shortly bring forward proposals for a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) which will facilitate cross-border transparency and recognition of qualifications and thus aid migrants' access to education, training and work in the EU.

**CBP 6 'Access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is a critical foundation for better integration'**

An important aspect of the integration process is ensuring that immigrants have access to public and private institutions and services without discrimination. This often requires specific measures to **build up the capacity of public and private service providers** to interact with third-country nationals and to understand and respond to their needs. Such strategies can be strengthened by improving the participation in the host society of organisations representing migrants. Experience has shown that service providers can be made more accessible for third-country nationals via intercultural interpretation and translation as well as intermediary services by representatives of immigrant communities and other similar measures.

Another area which could benefit from further support is the reinforcement and development of **consultation mechanisms at local and regional level** to maintain a dialogue between

[12] Point 43 of the Presidency Conclusions, European Council, 15/16 March 2002.

migrant communities and local people, institutions and others involved in the integration process. This is particularly important in the towns and cities where many immigrants settle.

In these areas there are already many interesting initiatives although they are not always well known outside of the town or region concerned. The Commission can therefore play an important role by supporting **research and exchange of good practice**. It also has an important role in **monitoring relevant EU legislation** concerning immigrants' rights.

**CBP 7 'Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens'**

Since the majority of immigrants in the EU live in the larger towns and cities, they are in the front line when it comes to devising and implementing integration measures. The process of integration goes on very largely in an urban context since this is where the daily interaction - which is at its core - takes place. **Measures which can improve the urban environment** and help to promote a shared sense of belonging and participation may, therefore, be instrumental in promoting integration. It is in this context that actions can be taken to establish **common forums for discussions** between different communities, to make available spaces and provide for activities (e.g. for sports or cultural activities) in which immigrants and the host society can interact together in a positive way. At the same time, low-quality housing and over representation of immigrants in deprived urban neighbourhoods create problems for integration in most Member States. Dealing with such issues requires close co-operation between regional, local and municipal authorities and underlines the central role of municipal authorities in the process of integration. At EU level, **strengthening the integration dimension in Social Inclusion and Social Protection Policies** is important.

**CBP 8 'The practice of diverse cultures and religions is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be safeguarded, unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law'**

Member States increasingly stress the importance of the socio-cultural dimension of integration. Both immigrants and nationals can be mobilised around intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. Most Member States are faced with the phenomenon of increasing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity and the need to manage intercultural challenges. The cultures and religions that immigrants bring with them have enriched our societies in many ways. However, difficulties can arise where religious or cultural beliefs or practices conflict with European fundamental values or with national law. In such cases each Member State must look for solutions which will necessarily reflect the national situation and the need to respect European fundamental values and national laws. This principle sets the boundaries within which such arrangements can be made.

The existence of **mechanisms for dialogue** between different ethnic and religious groups will greatly facilitate dialogue and discussion on such issues and on daily problems which may arise. Developing intercultural dialogue and contributing to the **creation of inter- and intra-faith dialogue platforms** between religious communities and/or between communities and policy-making authorities are among possible measures to be taken. Such dialogue is particularly necessary since strong religious beliefs can be one of the factors which contribute

to the development of radicalisation especially among young immigrants looking for a new sense of identity.

Such activities should be continued at EU level involving religious and humanist organisations and other stakeholders, pursuant to Declaration 11 to the Amsterdam Treaty.

**CBP 9 'The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration'**

The involvement of migrants' associations and organisations representing their interests in the development and implementation of integration measures has been shown to increase the value of such strategies. The participation of immigrants in the democratic process, particularly at the local level, enhances their role as residents and as participants in society. Providing for their participation and for the exercise of active citizenship is needed, most importantly at the political level and especially at the local level. Political rights provide both a means of expression and also bring with them responsibilities. In order to increase the participation of third-country nationals in local elections, actions such as **awareness-raising campaigns** and the **removal of obstacles** to the use of voting rights such as fees or bureaucratic requirements can be helpful. A **balanced gender representation** should be promoted.

Other examples of useful action concern the development of advisory platforms for consultation at all levels. The adaptation of many kinds of organisations to intercultural reality and efforts to engage immigrants in their work can also promote integration. Special volunteer programmes and internship schemes may be particularly helpful.

Building on activities at national level, the Commission can contribute by creating **platforms for dialogue at the EU level** to complement the national fora. Information is also needed about the **state of participation of immigrants** both in the political process and in the development of integration policies in the different Member States. Such a mapping exercise will contribute to ongoing reflections at EU level on the value of developing a **concept of civic citizenship** as a means of promoting the integration of immigrants who do not have national citizenship. Problems of identity lie at the heart of the difficulties which many young immigrants in particular seem to face today. Further exploration of these issues at EU level may therefore be helpful.